

redeem themselves from the imputation of being mere copyists, but they show themselves unacquainted with one of the leading features of the style.

As I am not aware that this view of the subject of decoration in Gothic architecture has been taken previously by any writer on the art, and as every suggestion for elucidating its theory may lead to a fuller investigation of its principles, and will give confidence to the designer, I trust these remarks will not be unacceptable.

THOMAS LITTLE.

THE SEVEN PERIODS OF CHURCH ARCHITECTURE.

HAD your correspondent "F. S. A." commenced the discussion between us in a spirit of friendly controversy, he would have been answered in the same spirit. But when, in his first letter, he ventured to quarrel with you for admitting a notice of a work which I had published into your pages, and proceeded to assert my incompetency to treat of the subject arising from my ignorance of the dates of buildings, and pronounced a conclusive judgment on the absurdity of my attempt, he forfeited, in my opinion, all title to be treated with that indulgence of which the subsequent discussion has proved him to stand so much in need.

It is evident, indeed, on the very face of the correspondence, that whilst the wish of the other three writers who have taken part in it is to inquire and to discuss, his sole object is to suppress and to condemn. With such an antagonist I must hold myself excused from following the example of your accomplished correspondent of last week, who bestows his approval and scatters his compliments with an universality and a liberality so peculiarly his own, as to render it not only impossible to take umbrage at his censures, but somewhat difficult to arrive with certainty at the result of his conclusions.

To the main proposition contained in the first letter of "F. S. A." I have endeavoured, as far as the discursive nature of his subsequent remarks would permit me, hitherto to confine myself: that question is essentially one of dates and examples, and has an important bearing upon the more general one of classification; and, as it appears to me that if "F. S. A." had proved the correctness of what he alleged in that proposition, it would have gone far to invalidate the division of the History of our National Architecture into seven Periods instead of four, I am not disposed to leave it until it is worked out.

To the remarkably small number of instances that he has advanced to support his rather broad assertions, he has in his last letter added two, namely, Barnham Abbey, which he says was founded A.D. 1265, and in the precincts of which he asserts there exist lancet windows; and the circular window in the north transept of Lincoln Cathedral, which he asserts agrees with my definitions of the "Geometrical Period;" but was built by Bishop Hugh, before A.D. 1200. Of the first obscure example I confess I know nothing, and am therefore unable to point out where his error lies. As regards the second, I deny the correctness of both his assertions; for, 1st, it does not correspond with my definition of a Geometrical window; and, 2nd, it was not built by Bishop Hugh. For proof of the first I must refer him to my definition of Geometrical Tracery, as given in Part I. of my Treatise on Decorated Windows, with which he will find the window in question no more corresponds than the circular window of Barreton Church does—built half a century earlier. The truth is, that this window exhibits one immense flat surface of stone-work, pierced with circles and trefoils, but containing no tracery of the kind defined by me in the treatise referred to. It is, in fact, not a window of the Geometrical Period. Secondly, I contend with Professor Willis that Bishop Hugh built only the Eastern Transepts of Lincoln Cathedral, the Choir, and the parts of the central transept immediately adjacent; and that his work, which is clearly marked, stopped short of that portion of the building in which this window

is situated, which belongs, in all probability, to the middle of the first half of the 13th century.

With the date of Wymington Church, as now corrected by "F. S. A." to A.D. 1370, I have no fault to find: and it only remains for me lastly to notice his authority for the date of the Five Sisters of York. I admit at once that his quotation, the one upon which most previous writers have already attributed the construction of the North Transept to Johannes Romanus, the treasurer, is strong evidence of his having contributed towards its building, or assisted in its completion: for more than this "F. S. A." does not contend, inasmuch as he agrees with Mr. Browne in believing it impossible that such a large work was constructed entirely as the chronicle states, "sumptibus suis propriis." Now it was Godfrey de Ludham, who was archbishop, not John le Romain who was treasurer, as "F. S. A." states, "from 1258 to 1264;" nor was this John le Romain the treasurer, the John le Romain, who was afterwards archbishop, as "F. S. A." states, from 1296 to 1295, but his father. (See Britton, p. 30.) It is not at all improbable therefore that John le Romain, the elder, completed in 1260, the North Transept, which may have been, and most likely was begun soon after the completion of the South Transept in 1227, that is to say, in the Lancet Period; a supposition which the close resemblance in details of the two buildings greatly confirms. In order to prove this position untenable, two things must be established:—1st. That Johannes Romanus built the entire Transept; and 2nd, that he did not commence it until after A.D. 1245; and until this is done I shall continue to hold that the North Transept of York Cathedral belongs to the close of the Lancet Period.

I have now examined the whole of the instances which "F. S. A." has adduced in support of his proposition, and I leave his facts, with my comments upon them, in the hands of those interested in the matter, to be hereafter referred to as occasion may require. Meanwhile, I shall now consider myself at liberty to enter upon the consideration of some of those questions, arising naturally out of this discussion, which may probably possess a higher interest for the general reader than the establishment of a few historical facts, however important such facts may be as the basis of classification.

I, therefore propose, with your permission, on a future occasion, to consider some or all of the following points:—1st. The meaning and use of the terms "Transition" and "Transitional;" 2nd. The meaning and use of the terms "Style" and "Period;" and, 3rd. The value and use of "Dates."

EDMUND SHARPE.

I AM extremely sorry to find that a controversy on such a subject as that in which Mr. Sharpe and "F. S. A." are the main combatants (the field of battle being only slightly diversified by the side shots of Mr. Cox and myself), should have given rise to so many hard words as it has done. I have so high a respect for both writers, and have derived so much benefit from the labours of both, that I cannot feel otherwise than grieved at seeing them brought into an antagonism of this kind, when all might have been done in a spirit of courteous and amicable controversy. If Mr. Sharpe be right in his conjecture—I confess to having made the same conjecture myself—as to the person lurking under the designation of "F. S. A.," I am the more grieved, as the only time that I have ever had the pleasure of meeting the author of the "Seven Periods" was in the company of the author of the "Glossary," when we examined together the church of St. Cross, near Winchester.

I differ from the author of the "Glossary" on many points, on many more than I do from Mr. Sharpe: for that very reason I cannot sit still and see the former unduly depreciated by the latter. I may freely speak my mind that I have learned far more of the facts and detail of architecture from the writings and conversation of Mr. Parker—there is no harm in speaking plainly after Mr. Sharpe's

allusions, whether Mr. Parker be the real "F. S. A." or not—than from any other source. At the same time I cannot but regret that one who has laid so admirable a foundation should occasionally seem disposed to object to others attempting to erect a superstructure, and positively to discourage those who, like Mr. Sharpe and myself, have endeavoured to enter on a wider and more philosophical view than his own. But there is no possible reason for disparaging the pre-eminent merit of his book—too well established in public favour for even Mr. Sharpe to disturb it—whenever it keeps to its own line. If I wished to know the exact date of an unusual moulding, I should apply to Mr. Parker before any man living: to ascertain what constitutes a distinct style of architecture I had rather confer with Mr. Sharpe or Mr. Petit; but it is beneath a man of Mr. Sharpe's reputation and ability to employ the style he does with regard to a letter which, though evidently displayed an incapacity to grasp Mr. Sharpe's arguments, and was altogether weak and inconclusive, certainly did not in any respect transgress the bounds of literary courtesy.

I suppose I may be considered as occupying the intermediate position between Mr. Sharpe and "F. S. A.," so that I ought to expect but little favour from either. Still, perhaps, I may be able to show that there is no such necessary difference between them as they suppose, inasmuch as I find it quite possible to agree with both. I employ, as I before said, Mr. Sharpe's, or rather my own division for theoretical purposes, the ordinary one for the description of particular buildings. My general view is this: there are two, and only two, really distinct types of Gothic buildings—the Early and Continuous of my own division; the Early Complete and Late Complete Gothic of Mr. Petit. This main division is one common to England, France, and Germany. But the particular course of the development differed widely in each. Thus, except in England, we have no prevailing Lancet style of Gothic, the architecture of the continent nowhere stopping to attain perfection between Romanesque and Geometrical. So probably England alone can produce a distinct Flowing style, separate both from Geometrical and Flamboyant; and our form—the Perpendicular—of fully developed Continuous Gothic is different from that of any other country. But all agree in possessing an Early and a Continuous style in some form or other. Looking now to England alone, we find a pure Early style, the Lancet; a purely Continuous style, the Perpendicular; two points at which the respective ideas of each are thoroughly carried out. Between these we have a period of transition, longer and more remarkable than any other transition: this period is that of the Decorated style—a style which to me seems entirely wanting in that full development of an idea which distinguishes its predecessor and its successor. It has no meaning or leading principle, and has to be defined by minute details. That is to say, Early and Continuous notions were for a long time in antagonism. But, amid this chaos we can detect two ideal forms, one essentially Early, yet not identical with the pure Lancet; the other already essentially Continuous, yet not identical with the future Perpendicular. These are respectively the Geometrical and Flowing styles; a sort of post-Lancet and ante-Perpendicular; no less distinctly marked in idea, as styles, than any others, but so perpetually jumbled together in practice that we want a name to denote this period of confusion or transition. And for this purpose I can see no objection to retaining the established term, Decorated, absurdly meaningless as it is, simply because it is the established term, and there is nothing to be gained by a change.

I think Mr. Sharpe is wrong in talking of seven periods, because Geometrical and Flowing (his Curvilinear) are not periods, but merely styles. Periods must be simply consecutive; styles may be, as in this case, contemporaneous. But it would not do to substitute "the seven styles," because the transition from Romanesque to Gothic is not a style but merely